

# GUZ 37 Haggai

*Bible Commentary:  
David Guzik TEV -*

**XXXVII**

**David Guzik**

**David Guzik's Commentary On**  
**37 Haggai**  
**Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)**

**The Command to Rebuild the Temple**

**Hag 1:1** In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, the word of Jehovah came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah; and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying:

Hag 1:2 So speaks Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people says, The time has not come, the time for the house of Jehovah to be built.

Hag 1:3 And the word of Jehovah was by Haggai the prophet, saying,

Hag 1:4 Is it time for you yourselves to live in your finished houses, and this house to lie waste?

Hag 1:5 And now, so says Jehovah of hosts: Set your heart on your ways!

Hag 1:6 You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but are not satisfied; you drink, but not to be filled; you dress, but there is no warmth to one. Yea, he who sells himself sells himself for a bag of holes.

Hag 1:7 So says Jehovah of hosts: Set your heart on your ways.

Hag 1:8 Go up the mountain and bring wood and build this house. And I will be pleased with it, and I will be glorified, says Jehovah.

Hag 1:9 You looked for much, and, behold, little! And when you brought it home, then I blew on it. Why, declares Jehovah of hosts? Because of My house that is ruined, and you, each man, run to his own house.

Hag 1:10 On account of this, the heavens above you have held back the dew, and the earth is held back from her produce.

Hag 1:11 And I called for a drought in the land, and on the mountains, and on the grain, and on the new wine, and on the oil, and on that which the ground produces, and on man, and on livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.

### **The People Obey the Lord**

Hag 1:12 Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Jehovah their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Jehovah their God had sent him. And the people feared before Jehovah.

Hag 1:13 And Haggai, the messenger of Jehovah, spoke the message of Jehovah to the people, saying, I am with you, says Jehovah.

Hag 1:14 And Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of Jehovah of hosts, their God,

Hag 1:15 in the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

## **Haggai 1:1-15**

### **Haggai 1 – Getting Priorities Straight**

**A. God rebukes the returning remnant for their misplaced priorities.**

*1. (1) Introduction.*

**In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of**

**Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying,**

- a. **In the second year of King Darius:** The prophecy of Haggai gives us several specific chronological marking points (Hag 1:1; Hag 1:15; Hag 2:1; Hag 2:10; Hag 2:20). Here we learn that the prophecy began in September, 520 B.C.
  - i. This makes Haggai the first among the *post-exilic* Minor Prophets. Of the 12 Minor Prophets, the first 9 spoke *before* Judah was carried away captive, exiled to Babylon. The last 3 Minor Prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) each spoke to those who returned from the 70-year exile.
  - ii. "Gone was the glory of the former kingdom and temple. Gone was the great population. All that was left was the rubble of Jerusalem, the remnant of the people, and the task of restoration." (Boice)
  - iii. In 538 B.C. Cyrus King of Persia allowed the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem after 70 years in captivity. Two years later (536 B.C.) construction on the temple began, led by Zerubbabel. The work stopped after two years (534 B.C.). After 14 years of neglect, work on the temple resumed in 520 B.C. and was finished four years later in 516 B.C. (Ezr 6:15).
  - iv. We notice the dates are reckoned by a pagan king because there was at that time no king over Israel. Yet the date was still important to God. "There is a set time for each of his messages to come to men, and God would have them give heed to every message as soon as it is delivered to them. If they do not, he keeps count of the days of their delay" (Spurgeon).
- b. **The word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet:** In the difficult years of the return from exile

God spoke to His people through the prophet Haggai.

i. Haggai is also mentioned twice in the Book of Ezra, the priest who oversaw the work of rebuilding the temple:

*Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them. (Ezr 5:1-2)*

*So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. (Ezr 6:14)*

ii. The name **Haggai** is probably an abbreviated form of the phrase, "Festival of Yahweh." Some speculate that he was born on the day of a major feast in Israel.

c. **Zerubbabel... Joshua:** Haggai introduced us to two leading figures in Jerusalem during these difficult days of rebuilding the temple. **Zerubbabel** was the governor of Jerusalem, and a descendant of the last legitimate ruler of Judah (Jechoniah). **Joshua** was the high priest.

2. (2) *An excuse for not rebuilding the temple.*

**"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.'"**

a. **The time has not come:** Haggai gave this first word in September, 520 B.C. At that time the exiles had been

back in Jerusalem for 18 years – but the work of rebuilding the temple laid idle for the last 14 years.

- i. The work started gloriously: *When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel." Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid* (Ezr 3:10-11).
- ii. Despite the glorious beginning, after two years the work stopped, mired in discouragement and derailed by a lack of focus. When Haggai prophesied the foundation to the temple was laid and the altar was rebuilt but the temple wasn't yet rebuilt.

b. **This people says:** God's **people** – the citizens of Jerusalem – told themselves that it wasn't yet **time** to resume work on the temple. There were some good reasons why they might say this, and why the work of rebuilding the temple was hard:

- The land was still desolate after 70 years of neglect.
- The work was hard.
- They didn't have a lot of money (Hag 1:6) or manpower.
- They suffered crop failures and drought (Hag 1:10-11).
- Hostile enemies resisted the work (Ezr 4:1-5).
- They remembered easier times in Babylon.

c. **The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built:** The people made their excuse sound spiritual. They couldn't speak against the *idea* of building the temple, so they spoke against its *timing*. They said, "It isn't God's timing to rebuild the temple."

i. Because of the great obstacles against the work, God's people began to rationalize and decided that it wasn't time to rebuild after all. "If it's so hard, evidently, God doesn't want us to do it - at least no time soon."

ii. They may have said "**the time has not come**" because they thought that the 70 years of captivity mentioned in Jer 25:11-13; Jer 29:10 had not yet been fulfilled. According to Usher's chronology of these events, they were in the 69th year since the last siege of Jerusalem. Even in this, the people of God lacked faith. There were three "waves" of captivity - 605 B.C., 597 B.C., and 587 B.C. In Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9, he was bold enough to ask God to take the earliest starting point to determine the 70 years - and God did. Unbelief made these returned captives think that God's mercy might not come to Israel until 18 years later.

d. **This people:** We never like to hear God speak to His people this way - saying, "**this people**" instead of "My people." He said this because He saw their excuses and their poor priorities and noticed that they were not living like His people.

i. We should remember that these weren't "bad people." They were the remnant that returned from Babylon. Hundreds of thousands of people went into the Babylonian captivity and only about 50,000 returned. Those who did were the most committed to the LORD and to the restoration of Jerusalem.

3. (3-4) Haggai exposes their wrong priorities.

**Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"**

- a. **Then the word of the LORD came:** God saw and heard their excuses and poor priorities – and He had something to say to them through **Haggai the prophet**.
- b. **It is time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses:** The people said that it wasn't *time* to rebuild the temple, but their actions said that it was **time** to live in nicely rebuilt houses.
  - i. "Solomon first built a house for God, and then for himself." (Trapp)
- c. **And this temple to lie in ruins:** This was the real problem – not that God's people lived in **paneled houses**, but that they lived in such personal comfort and luxury while the **temple** was in **ruins**.
  - i. The problem was simply wrongly ordered priorities. They were content to let the cause of the Lord suffer at the expense of their comfort. Instead, they should have felt no rest until the work of God was as prosperous as their personal lives, and been as willing to sacrifice for work of God as they were for their personal comfort and luxury.
  - ii. It is easy to see how this happened over 14 years. At first the work is stopped because it is so difficult and some obstacle in the construction prevented progress.
    - "We can't get much done at the temple, and I'm tired of living in a wreck. Time to start the remodel at home."

- “God wants me to give attention to things at home – home comes first.”
- “I would fund more construction at the temple but all my money is tied up with my home renovation.”
- “I’m not living extravagantly – look at the other houses in my neighborhood! Look at the chariots in their driveway!”
- “Someone should get to work on the temple. I hope someone steps up to the job – I’ve got to finish paneling my living room.”
- “The temple hasn’t been open for business for well more than 50 years – a little while longer won’t matter.”
- “This isn’t the right time – later will be better.”
- “The altar is there and we can at least sacrifice to the LORD. We’re getting by.”

iii. The excuses sound familiar – but God saw through them in the days of Haggai, and He sees through similar excuses today. The prophet Haggai was like an alarm clock: unwelcome but necessary.

iv. “Many Christians are like those ancient Hebrews, somehow convincing themselves that economy in constructing church buildings is all-important while at the same time sparing no expense in acquiring their personal luxuries.” (Alden)

v. **Houses:** “It seems to intimate some of them had more than one house, a city and a country house, and whilst God’s house lay waste; they thus lavish out their wealth on private worldly conveniences, but grudge their charge against God’s house... Do you owe so much to yourselves, and so little to your God?” (Poole).

4. (5-6) Consider your ways and the result of them.

**Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts:  
"Consider your ways!"**

**You have sown much, and bring in little;  
You eat, but do not have enough;  
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;  
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;  
And he who earns wages,  
Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."**

a. **Consider your ways:** The Hebrew figure of speech for this phrase is literally "put your heart on your roads." Haggai asks God's people to consider what direction their life was headed, and if they really wanted it to continue that way.

b. **You have sown much, and bring in little:** The cause of their financial difficulties was their wrong priorities. They suffered setback after setback because the blessing of God wasn't on their pocketbook.

i. Haggai describes a double curse. Instead of much, **little** was reaped; and the little that was brought home melted away without doing any good (**earns wages to put into a bag with holes**). "I do not know of any passage in the Bible that better describes the feverish yet ineffective activity of our own age" (Boice).

ii. These judgments were a fulfillment of promises God made hundreds of years before in the time of Moses (Deu 11:16-17). The people of Israel were being judged and they didn't even know it – they probably wrote it all off as bad luck or tough economic times, but God was trying to tell them something.

iii. Sometimes our priorities are out of order and we seem to suffer no financial hardship. In such times we

should never presume on the mercy of God – we should turn to Him and re-order our priorities before He needs to use crisis to get through to us.

c. **You drink, but you are not filled with drink:** If our priorities are wrong, nothing will satisfy us. Each accomplishment soon reveals that there must be something more, something that can really satisfy. Nothing fills the God-shaped void in our life except putting Him first.

i. "Had your little been as the righteous man's little, you might have lived on it, and rejoiced in it; but it had not such a blessing upon it; it was blasted, and so was weak, and empty, and profited little." (Poole)

5. (7-11) *What they must do: rebuild the temple.*

**Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD. You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."**

a. **Go up to the mountains and bring wood:** God called them to *work*. Sometimes God's cause needs *work*, work that is supported by prayer, not work that is neglected because of pretended spiritual service.

i. It was work to be embraced by individuals without thinking, "Someone else will do it." When David

Livingstone applied to a missionary society in Scotland because he wanted to bring Jesus to Africa they told him, "Young man, when God sees fit to evangelize Africa He will do it without your help." This is not the case at all – God *will* do it, and He *wants* and *often will wait* for our participation.

b. **That I may take pleasure in it and be glorified:** It was time for God's people to start being concerned with pleasing Him instead of themselves. In their nice houses and prosperous lives they took pleasure and were glorified; now it was the LORD's turn.

i. God was also telling them to do it with the right kind of heart; a heart that wanted to please and glorify God

c. **You looked for much, but indeed it came to little:** When God was neglected, nothing worked right. They were able to accomplish some things (like building their own houses), but it didn't bring the satisfaction that it should have.

d. **For I called for a drought on the land:** We can imagine the people of God depressed and discouraged because of the drought. They thought it was all an attack of Satan, and they prayed fervently against what they said was Satan's plot. Yet it wasn't Satan's doing at all, but it was the LORD who **called for a drought on the land**. The problem wasn't Satan, but their priorities.

e. **On the grain and the new wine and the oil:** Because they neglected the LORD, He neglected to bless their three basic crops.

## **B. The response to Haggai's prophecy.**

1. (12) *They obeyed God and feared His presence.*

**Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the**

**remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD.**

- a. **Then Zerubbabel... and Joshua... with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD:** Obedience had to begin with the leadership. This wasn't a sermon just for the *people*, but also for the highest leaders among God's people.
- b. **The voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet:** The **voice** of God was expressed through **the words of Haggai**. This is the principle of the inspiration of the scriptures in action. God literally speaks, but through a man's **words**.
  - i. "For the word of God is not distinguished from the words of the Prophet, as though the Prophet had added anything of his own." (Calvin)
  - ii. In pointing out both, Haggai is distinguishing between the Author of the truth and the messenger of the truth.
- c. **The words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him:** Their respect for Haggai was based on his office (**prophet**) and his commission (**God had sent him**).
- d. **The people feared the presence of the LORD:** Their fear of God prompted obedience. This was more than basic respect; it was recognition that God is a judge who deals with us righteously.

2. (13-15) *God responds to His people.*

**Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, spoke the LORD's message to the people, saying, "I am with you, says the LORD." So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of**

**Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.**

- a. **I am with you, says the LORD:** God was there to encourage them, and to strengthen them for the work. He always empowers and encourages us to do what He commands.
- b. **So the LORD stirred up the spirit:** Would to God for such a stirring of spirit among His people today! This stirring begins with the leadership (**Zerubbabel... Joshua**) and extends to the people (**all the remnant of the people**).
- c. **They came and worked on the house of the LORD:** The stirring of spirit didn't come and go just as a spiritual experience. The stirring of spirit flourished into a stirring of the work.

## **The Coming Glory of the Temple**

**Hag 2:1** In the seventh month , on the twenty-first of the month, the word of Jehovah was by Haggai the prophet, saying,

Hag 2:2 Now speak to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

Hag 2:3 Who is left among you who saw this house in her former glory? And how do you see it now? When compared to it, is it not as nothing in your eyes?

Hag 2:4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, says Jehovah. And be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. And be strong and work, all people of the land, says Jehovah. For I am with you, declares Jehovah of hosts,

Hag 2:5 with the Word by whom I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear.

Hag 2:6 For so says Jehovah of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.

Hag 2:7 And I will shake all the nations; and the desire of all nations shall come. And I will fill this house with glory, says Jehovah of hosts.

Hag 2:8 The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says Jehovah of hosts.

Hag 2:9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, says Jehovah of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, says Jehovah of hosts.

### **Blessings for a Defiled People**

Hag 2:10 In the twenty-fourth of the ninth month , in the second year of Darius, the word of Jehovah came to Haggai the prophet, saying,

Hag 2:11 So says Jehovah of hosts: Now ask the priests the law, saying,

Hag 2:12 Behold, one bears holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and touches his skirt to the bread, or boiled food, or wine, or oil, or any food, will it become holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

Hag 2:13 And Haggai said, If the unclean of body touches these, is it unclean? And the priests answered and said, It is unclean.

Hag 2:14 And Haggai answered and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, declares Jehovah. And so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

Hag 2:15 And now, I ask you, set your heart on it; from this day and onward: before the placing of a stone on a stone in

the temple of Jehovah;

Hag 2:16 from then onward, one came to a heap of twenty measures , and there were but ten. One came to the wine vat to draw out fifty from the wine trough, and there were but twenty.

Hag 2:17 I struck you with blight, and with mildew, and with hail, in all the labors of your hands; yet you did not turn to Me, says Jehovah.

Hag 2:18 Now set your heart from this day and forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month , from the day that Jehovah's temple was established. Set your heart:

Hag 2:19 Is the seed still in the barn? Yes, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not brought forth. From this day I will bless them .

### **Zerubbabel Chosen as a Signet**

Hag 2:20 And a second time the word of Jehovah was to Haggai, in the twenty-fourth of the month, saying,

Hag 2:21 Speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth.

Hag 2:22 And I will overthrow the throne of the kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations. And I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will come down, each one by the sword of his brother.

Hag 2:23 In that day, says Jehovah of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, says Jehovah, and will make you like a signet; for I have chosen you, declares Jehovah of hosts.

## **Haggai 2:1-23**

### **Haggai 2 – The Glory of the Second Temple**

## **A. The second word from God: the glory of the new temple.**

*1. (1-3) Is the new temple as nothing compared to Solomon's temple?*

**In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying: "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?'"**

a. **In the seventh month:** This message came in October of 520 B.C. It was feast time in Israel, celebrating both the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles.

b. **Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory?** Haggai spoke some 66 years after the temple was destroyed. Certainly there were some old men who had seen Solomon's temple in its splendor.

i. Ezr 3:12-13 describes what those who had seen the first temple felt like 16 years before this prophecy of Haggai, when the work of rebuilding the temple first began:

*But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted*

*with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.*  
(Ezr 3:12-13)

ii. The men in Ezra 3 wept because they **saw this temple in its former glory**. When Solomon built the first temple, he spared no expense in materials, and hired the best talent he could find to do the work. The temple to be rebuilt couldn't match the majesty of that first temple.

c. **In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing:** These kind of comparisons between "the good old days" and the present day – or between the work of God in various places and times – are rarely beneficial. It didn't do the people of Haggai's day any good to think of how magnificent Solomon's temple was compared to their own rebuilding work.

i. "The smallness of our gifts may be a temptation to us. We are consciously so weak and so insignificant, compared with the great God and his great cause, that we are discouraged, and think it vain to attempt anything . . . the enemy contrasts our work with that of others, and with that of those who have gone before us. We are doing so little as compared with other people, therefore let us give up. We cannot build like Solomon, therefore let us not build at all. Yet, brethren, there is a falsehood in all this, for, in truth, nothing is worthy of God. The great works of others, and even the amazing productions of Solomon, all fell short of his glory." (Spurgeon)

ii. A.W. Tozer suggested this prayer regarding our tendency to compare and compete:

"Dear Lord, I refuse henceforth to compete with any of Thy servants. They have congregations larger than mine. So be it. I rejoice in their success. They have greater gifts. Very well. That is not in their power nor

in mine. I am humbly grateful for their greater gifts and my smaller ones. I only pray that I may use to Thy glory such modest gifts as I possess. I will not compare myself with any, nor try to build up my self-esteem by noting where I may excel one or another in Thy holy work. I herewith make a blanket disavowal of all intrinsic worth. I am but an unprofitable servant. I gladly go to the foot of the cross and own myself the least of Thy people. If I err in my self judgment and actually underestimate myself I do not want to know it. I purpose to pray for others and to rejoice in their prosperity as if it were my own. And indeed it is my own if it is Thine own, for what is Thine is mine, and while one plants and another waters it is Thou alone that giveth the increase." (A.W. Tozer, *The Price of Neglect*)

## 2. (4-5) Carry on the work in strength and assurance.

**"Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel," says the LORD; "and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land," says the LORD, "and work; for I am with you," says the LORD of hosts. "According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!"**

a. **Be strong... and work... do not fear:** God gave the leaders and people of Israel three clear commands. Each of these three were essential to getting the work of God done. Great things are not accomplished without *action*.

i. "What was lacking was dissatisfaction with things as they were, and the consequent drive to initiate action. Resignation killed faith." (Baldwin)

b. **I am with you... according to the word that I covenanted with you when You came out of Egypt:**

The same God that did great things in the past was among them today, so they could be encouraged.

- i. "Undoubtedly fear gripped many of the returnees – fear that God had written an eternal 'Ichabod' over Jerusalem" (Alden)
- c. **My Spirit remains among you:** Under the Old Covenant the Holy Spirit was *among* the people. Under the New Covenant He would be *in* God's people.

3. (6-9) *Why the rebuilt temple will be more glorious than the temple of Solomon.*

**For thus says the LORD of hosts:** "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," says the LORD of hosts. "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," says the LORD of hosts. "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts. "And in this place I will give peace," says the LORD of hosts.

a. **Once more... I will shake heaven and earth:** This is the only portion of Haggai quoted in the New Testament (Heb 12:26). It announces God's intention to **shake** the present order in His coming day of judgment.

b. **They shall come to the Desire of All Nations:** Through the centuries, most see this as a prophecy of the Messiah coming to this temple rebuilt in the days of Haggai and Ezra. This understanding began with the ancient rabbis and continued among Christians, and fits in well with the promise of filling the **temple with glory**.

i. Some point out that this word for **Desire** can also be translated *treasures*. We know that the Gentiles will bring tribute to the LORD in the Millennium (Isa 60:5) – but that won't bring treasure to this

temple that was rebuilt in the days of Ezra and Haggai.

ii. The true **Desire of All Nations** is Jesus, even if the nations themselves do not know it. "He is the one, the true Reformer, the true rectifier of all wrong, and in this respect the desire of all nations. Oh! if the world could gather up all her right desire; if she could condense in one cry all her wild wishes; if all true lovers of mankind could condense their theories and extract the true wine of wisdom from them; it would just come to this, we want an Incarnate God, and you have got the Incarnate God! Oh! Nations, but ye know it not! Ye, in the dark, are groping after him, and know not that he is there" (Spurgeon).

iii. Knowing that Jesus is the **Desire of All Nations** also encourages our missionary work. "Brethren, I may add, Christ is certainly the desire of all nations in this respect, that we desire him for all nations. Oh! That the world were encompassed in his gospel! Would God the sacred fire would run along the ground, that the little handful of corn on the top of the mountains would soon make its fruit to shake like Lebanon. Oh! When will it come, when will it come that all the nations shall know him? Let us pray for it: let us labor for it" (Spurgeon).

c. **"The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," says the LORD of hosts:** They didn't need to be discouraged if they didn't have money for the building project. They had to boldly trust the God who owned every resource, and then give generously.

i. When we really trust God, we will give generously. Hudson Taylor, the groundbreaking missionary to the interior regions of China in the second half of the nineteenth century experienced this principle early in

his life. As a young man he preached in boarding houses in the poor slums of London. A poor man asked Taylor to come back to his room and pray for his wife who suffered complications from childbirth was near death. The man had no money at all, and couldn't afford to pay a priest to come and perform last rites. Taylor went to the man's room and found the heartbreaking situation – several children, the afflicted mother and a three-day-old baby living in absolute filth and squalor, with absolutely no food or money. Taylor knew he had a \$20 coin in his pocket that would meet their needs, but it was all the money he had in the world himself. He began to speak to the family about God when the Lord spoke to his own heart: "You hypocrite! Telling these unconverted people about a kind and loving Father in heaven, and not prepared yourself to trust him without your \$20." Taylor wished that he had two \$10 pieces, and he would gladly have given them one – but all he had was one \$20 coin. He was taken aback, but decided to lead the family in the Lord's Prayer. As soon as he said the words "Our Father," the Lord convicted him of his hypocrisy again. He struggled through the prayer under tremendous conviction and then gave the father the \$20 piece. That provision saved the life of the mother and rescued the family.

ii. The lesson is plain. Knowing God provides should make us *more* generous, instead of less generous ("I don't have to give to their need, because God will provide for them some other way").

d. **The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former:** The glory of this temple was in fact **greater**. First, Herod remodeled this second temple into something **greater** than Solomon's temple. Second, the

LORD of Glory – Jesus – personally visited it and worshipped there.

- i. “Because Christ shall appear and preach in it, who is the brightness of his Father’s glory.” (Trapp)
- ii. Some scholars speculate that Herod remodeled the temple with the intent of fulfilling **the glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former**, so that *he* might fulfill it *instead* of the Messiah.
- e. **And in this place I will give peace:** The promised **peace** is *shalom*. It means far more than stopping conflict – it is the establishment of a lasting, righteous, good.

## **B. The third word from God: clean and unclean.**

### *1. (10-14) A question for the priests.*

**On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying, “If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?” “ Then the priests answered and said, “No.” And Haggai said, “If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?” So the priests answered and said, “It shall be unclean.” Then Haggai answered and said, “So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the LORD, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.**

- a. **Will it become holy? Will it be unclean?** Haggai questioned the priests – who were accustomed to answering such questions – about the transmission of both holiness and impurity. The priests answered

correctly according to the Law of Moses: holiness is not contagious, but impurity is.

- i. A sick child cannot catch health from contacting a healthy child; but the healthy child can become sick. The principle of transmission really only works one way far more than both ways.
- b. **So is this people, and so is this nation before Me:** On the same principle, living in the Holy Land and offering sacrifices would not make the people acceptable, as long as they themselves were unclean through neglect of the house of the LORD.
  - i. Since their exile to Babylon, the people of Israel focused on *getting back to the Promised Land*. In and of itself this was not a bad focus; yet it led to the thinking that once they made it back to the Promised Land everything else would be good. Haggai reminded them that their presence in the Promised Land doesn't make everything they do holy. If the priorities of our heart are wrong, nothing we do is really holy to God.
  - ii. "The ruined skeleton of the Temple was like a dead body decaying in Jerusalem and making everything contaminated." (Baldwin)

2. (15-19) *God sees their change of heart and promises a harvest of blessing to come.*

**'And now, carefully consider from this day forward: from before stone was laid upon stone in the temple of the LORD; since those days, when one came to a heap of twenty ephahs, there were but ten; when one came to the wine vat to draw out fifty baths from the press, there were but twenty. I struck you with blight and mildew and hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you did not turn to Me,' says the LORD. Consider**

**now from this day forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid; consider it: Is the seed still in the barn? As yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yielded fruit. But from this day I will bless you."**

- a. **I struck you with blight and mildew and hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you did not turn to Me:** Those experiences of God's chastening were real but God's people did not learn from them. Difficult times don't necessarily bring us closer to God.
- b. **But from this day I will bless you:** God promised blessing to His people if they put their priorities back in order, with Him and His work first. Nevertheless, the blessings might not come immediately and He did not want them to become discouraged, but to trust that that **from this day I will bless you.**

### **C. The final word from God: God rules.**

1. (20-22) *God asserts His sovereignty over the nations.*

**And again the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying:**

**'I will shake heaven and earth.  
I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms;  
I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms.  
I will overthrow the chariots  
And those who ride in them;  
The horses and their riders shall come down,  
Every one by the sword of his brother.**

- a. **I will shake heaven and earth. I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms:** It was easy for the returning exiles to feel insignificant in the world, as if they were

just pawns or spectators. God wanted them to know that though they were small in the eyes of the superpowers of the world, they were servants of the God of all power. They are on the winning side.

b. **I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them:** This word of encouragement shows us that Haggai's messages from God were a mixture of rebuke and encouragement. God promised to fight for His people in His day of restoration and rescue.

## 2. (23) *A promise to Zerubbabel.*

**'In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,' says the LORD, 'and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you,' says the LORD of hosts.**

a. **I will take you, Zerubbabel... and will make you like a signet ring:** The **signet ring** was a token of royal authority much like a throne, a crown, or a scepter.

i. "This is not a personal assurance only to Zerubbabel, for neither he nor his natural seed reigned in Jerusalem, or rose to any special eminence in the kingdoms of this world." (Pulpit)

b. **For I have chosen you:** Zerubbabel was truly chosen of God. In the ancestry of Jesus, Zerubbabel was the last person to stand to be in both the line of Mary (the blood lineage of Jesus – Luk 3:27) and Joseph (the legal lineage of Jesus through Joseph – Mat 1:12).

i. God used these two lines of ancestry for Jesus because He placed a curse on the seed of Jechoniah (also known as Coniah or Jehoiachin) as recorded in Jer 22:30. That line was royal line of David, so if the Messiah was to qualify for the throne of David (Luk 1:31-33), he had to be of the legal line of David, yet not of his seed.

ii. Jechoniah was the last legitimate king of Judah and the royal House of David goes through him. His only successor was Zedekiah, his uncle who was appointed not by right, but by an occupying Babylonian ruler (2Ki 24:17-20). Even at the end of his life, the Babylonians recognized Jechoniah as the legitimate king of Judah (2Ki 25:27-30)

iii. Because Zerubbabel was a descendant of the last legitimate king of Judah, he could be legitimately recognized as the ruler (though not king) of the returning exiles.